

REMARKS

Applicant has carefully studied the Office Action dated December 15, 2003. The present response is intended to be fully responsive to all points of rejection and/or objection raised by the Examiner. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Objections to the Specification

The specification is objected to as not containing an Abstract of the Disclosure. An Abstract is included herewith.

The specification is further objected to as not providing antecedent basis for the term "fence" in claim 1. Claim 1 is amended herewith, replacing the term "fence" with "means for." The resulting claim 1 recitation of "means for precluding the introduction..." is supported by the disclosure on page 7, last paragraph, and page 8, first paragraph.

Objections to the Drawings

The drawings are objected to as not showing longitudinal opening 17. In amended Fig. 2, included herewith, the previously omitted element numeral 17 has been added.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 96-99 and 101 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite in lacking antecedent basis for the limitation in claim 96 of "said penetrating apex shield segments." Applicant notes with appreciation the allowance of claims 96-99 and 101 provided that this rejection is overcome. Claim 96 is amended herewith in which the limitation of "said penetrating apex shield segments" has been removed. Claim 96 is therefore deemed allowable. Claims 97 – 99 and 101 depend either directly or indirectly from amended claim 96, and are therefore allowable *a fortiori*.